

*Press Mollenhoff, chair
Press Blair, William M
Eng 1 National Press Club*

National Press Club Has a Real Contest For Presidency First Time in 33 Years

By Edward T. Folliard
Staff Reporter

Conflict makes news, they say, and so today's annual election at the National Press Club would seem to rate a headline.

Ordinarily elections at this, the largest and best-known club of its kind in the world, arouse no great excitement—at least where the top offices are concerned.

But this time there is a sizzling battle for the presidency, the first real contest for the No. 1 office in 33 years. Consequently, a large turnout of voters is predicted.

The candidates for president, as they are listed on the ballot, are Clark R. Mollenhoff of the Cowles Publications and William M. (Bill) Blair of the New York Times.

Both men already hold office in the National Press Club, Mollenhoff as vice president and Blair as secretary.

The big issue in the election is what is known as the "escalator system." For years it has been taken for granted that once a member is elected vice



CLARK R. MOLLENHOFF



WILLIAM M. BLAIR

... opponents for presidency of National Press Club

president, he will move up to the presidency escalator fashion—automatically, without opposition. Some have likened this to royal succession.

Having been elected vice

president last year, Mollenhoff had good reason to believe that he would ride the escalator to the presidency this year.

Then came a revolt against the system, and Bill Blair was

persuaded to run against Mollenhoff. The New York Times man announced his candidacy on Dec. 1.

In past years, the absence of conflict and contests has resulted in a comparatively small turnout of voters. Last year it was less than 15 percent of those qualified to cast ballots.

In a flier sent to all active members, the Bill Blair for President Committee likened past Press Club elections to the one-party Russian system and said:

"Let's get rid of the Russian ballot in the NPC.

"For the first time in decades you can CHOOSE a president, not just ACCEPT one.

"He (Bill Blair) is running out of turn, bucking the escalator system . . ."

Candidate Mollenhoff, a battler, had this to say yesterday:

"I believe in free, clean election contests at the National Press Club, and have helped stimulate some competition for these offices. I have run for election to the Board of Governors in three election contests and won. The record